

# 5 ways to persuade employees to take vacation before they burnout

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American workers left a stunning in 2015, fear of heavy workload upon returning and burdening colleagues in their absence. And employees who take time off are reluctant to completely disconnect -- 41 percent admitted to touching base with the office while on vacation.

When the team is small and each quarter's results are make-or-break for the company, it never feels like a good time to step away. But commitment to work may actually be hurting employee performance and burning out good employees.

Burnout is bad for business. Time off decreases stress, boosts productivity and improves work performance. Employees in countries that encourage workers to are more productive when they're at work. In addition, burned out employees can actually because they're more likely to either make irrational decisions or have difficulty making decisions at all.

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From LinkedIn the week of July 4, to the U. S. Travel Association giving employees who used vacation time , companies are beginning to take time off.

The go-go-gocultureof startups can establish unwritten policies that are more powerful than the official ones. Often, it takes a strategic focus to encourage employees to truly take time off to relax, recalibrate and refocus. Here are five tactics that can make a difference:

## **1. Practice what you preach.**

From dress code to time off, my team follows the tone set by the leader. If they see the boss working nonstop, they feel obligated to keep pace. When the boss takes a vacation, employees feel free to follow suit. Be conscious of walking the walk, whether it's scheduling a day or two off to unplug or pitching in to cover for employees who are away.

Opencommunicationbetween a leader and his or her team is vital. If leaders are willing to jump in on a task outside the range of their normal responsibilities, they are demonstrating to the entire team that everyone should be willing to help cover for each other. From helping keep the office kitchen disaster-free to sitting with the development team to discuss a hurdle in a re-design project, there's nothing a leader shouldn't do to set the example.

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## **2. Learn employee strengths and weaknesses.**

One-on-one communication is essential to gauge how each team member is handling the workload. What might take one employee two days to complete may take another a full week, and while team meetings have their purpose, a group setting is not the best for identifying who is feeling burned out.

Establish an open-door policy that encourages regular, individual conversations. Not only does this help leaders get to know how individuals cope with challenges, but it also encourages employees agonizing over project hurdles to ask for help. Knowing employees on a personal level makes it easier for leaders to recognize when individuals need a vacation and encourage them to do so.

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## **3. Schedule around life.**

It's impossible to know everything that is going on with employees outside of the office -- some may be caring for young kids or other family members, while others may have community obligations like volunteering or mentoring. Life happens regardless of work goals.

Create a culture that gives employees the flexibility to complete their tasks on a schedule that fits the demands of their life. This is sometimes easier said than done when it comes to important collaborative tasks, but providing options can pay off in productivity and employee satisfaction.

#### **4. Change the terms you use.**

A simple thing like changing the vocabulary you use to describe days off can make employees more comfortable about taking them. Be mindful that high-stress events like losing loved ones or minor stresses like an unexpected broken air conditioner happen every day to people, and often people prefer to keep these struggles private.

Switching terms to “personal” or “flexible” instead of “sick” or “bereavement” time, for example, gives employees permission to use the time how they need it without feeling like they have to meet certain criteria.

#### **5. Announce a surprise holiday.**

When employees aren't taking enough time off, consider creating an unplanned office holiday. When my team reaches a milestone and everyone is low on physical and mental energy, I like to send out an email giving the option to extend the weekend by a day or two. I always make sure everyone knows I'll be doing the same.

Personal days are a great way to encourage personal time off with no questions asked -- for employees, they can provide a much-needed break without making anyone worry about getting in trouble.

Preventing employee burnout through a vacation-friendly culture is just as vital to a company's success as expense forecasts and strategic plans.

Encouraging employees to step away from work actually results in increased dedication and productivity. And that's exactly what every startup needs.